
Call for Papers

Strong Asymmetrical Dependencies: Perspectives from Asia, Past and Present, 06 – 08 May 2025

Since the global turn, research about [strong asymmetrical dependencies](#) across time and space (among which, but not limited to slavery, bondage, labor and coercion) has greatly expanded both conceptually and geographically. Asia, however defined, is certainly not the blind spot it once was in labor and slavery studies anymore. Yet, despite the pluralization recently generated by global labor and global slavery studies, Asia still remains marginal in many respects. Slavery in early-modern Asia, to mention only one example, is increasingly studied through the lens of European archives, and through European terms of what this slavery entailed, leaving aside the study of forms of exploitation and forced displacement that took place before, beside and beyond the European presence in Asia. What seems to be particularly missing in current discussions is an emic perspective *from* Asia; that is to say, a more granular and accurate view of the practices, norms and their evolutions, from existing vernacular sources (written, oral and material) and from the actor's experiences, categories and worldviews. What also seems to be missing is a genuine accounting of Asian historiographies, as well as a proper assessment of the legacies and memories of these diverse phenomena in the contemporary societies of Asia.

Organized by the [Bonn Center of Dependency and Slavery Studies](#) (Germany), this conference is dedicated to filling these gaps by shining a pluridisciplinary and emic light 1) on the variegated histories of dependency, slavery, bondage, coerced labor and forced displacement across Asia, and 2) on their historiographies, their legacies, their memories, and their current forms. We thus warmly invite scholars from all over the world and from various disciplines to participate and contribute to improving our understanding of the place of strong asymmetrical dependencies in Asia, across time and spaces, and from an Asian perspective. We are particularly looking for innovative historical case studies, but we are also very much interested in contributions relating to other issues and perspectives such as: emic terminologies and concept formation; historiography and memory; archival regimes; data collection and digital approaches; long-term dynamics and resurgences of strong asymmetrical dependencies. Finally, beyond adding new case studies about Asia to these (and to other) research topics, we also intend to take the opportunity of this conference to ponder upon what taking an "Asian perspective" means, what is fruitful (or not) when doing so, and how it can contribute to advance knowledge, scholarly dialogue, and interdisciplinarity.

The conference will take place in Bonn, Germany, from May 6 to May 8, 2025. It will be structured around three different formats: paper presentations and discussions; thematic injections; and roundtables (including a strategic discussion about the future and the structuration of the field, and a discussion about digital approach in collaboration with representatives of the [Exploring Slave Trade in Asia](#) Network).

Funding: The conference is funded by the BCDSS. Funding includes hotel nights in Bonn. As to transportation, we will have to prioritize researchers who do not have access to travel money.

Expected outcome: The organizers plan to publish a selection of contributions either in a journal special issue or in one (or more) edited volume(s).

Submission process and papers selection: The selection process will be based on the relevance of individual papers in addressing the topics and questions raised by the conference, and on the ways in which they might dialogue with one another. We will be attentive to balancing topics, approaches,

disciplines, time periods, and areas. We welcome contributions from established scholars as much as from early career researchers, and we particularly encourage scholars working in institutions across Asia to join in the discussion.

- Abstract submission deadline (max. 500 words): **October 31st, 2024**
- Announcement of selected contributions: **December 15th, 2024**
- Draft papers circulation among participants: 1 month prior to the event

Contact: asiaconference@dependency.uni-bonn.de

Organization: Anas Ansar, Jeannine Bischoff, Claude Chevaleyre, Emma Kalb, Christine Mae Sarito, Subin Nam, Lisa Phongsavath, Nabhojeet Sen, Elena Smolarz